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ARTICLES:

(1) Opinion poll shows unaffiliated voters fleeing LDP, but not flowing into the DPJ; Sense of impasse regarding both parties

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
November 4, 2008

In the Yomiuri Shimbun poll carried out Nov. 1-3, together with the decline in the support rate for the cabinet of Prime Minister Taro Aso, a sudden drop in those who support the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) also was striking. However, it appears that those who are deserting the LDP are not going over to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Instead, they seem to be joining the ranks of the unaffiliated voters. In addition, those who called for a "new framework by political realignment" and "a grand coalition between the LDP and DPJ" have now reached a majority of eligible voters. Much of the electorate seems to be beginning to feel frustrated with the lack of choice between the two major parties, the LDP and the DPJ.

Looking at the changes in support to political parties since the inauguration of the Aso government, the rates in Sept. and Oct. put the LDP on top (with 37.4 PERCENT and then 38.7 PERCENT). Those with no party preference (mutouhasou) were in second place (with 26.3 PERCENT and then 26.5 PERCENT). In third place (with 22.8 PERCENT and then 24.3) was the DPJ. In the latest election, the LDP dropped sharply to 32.4 PERCENT, while the unaffiliated voters

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jumped to 33.0 PERCENT, the top of the list. The DPJ stayed more or less the same at 23.4 PERCENT.

Similarly, when asked about who they would vote for in the upcoming Lower House election's proportionate slate, the LDP was preferred by 32 PERCENT (down 7 points from the Oct. survey), while the DPJ was chosen by 31 PERCENT (down 1 point), and another 24 PERCENT were undecided (an increase of 9 points). On the question of who was more appropriate to be prime minister, Prime Minister Aso or DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, Aso received 50 PERCENT (down 6 points) and Ozawa's support was 22 PERCENT (down a point). There seems to be a sense of blockage or impasse here, with voters feeling that although they had tired of politics centered on the LDP, they did not have the desire to directly support the DPJ either.

On what would be the desirable administration following a Lower House election, the latest survey found 27 PERCENT of the electorate, the highest choice, favoring a grand coalition between the LDP and the DPJ. Another 25 PERCENT wanted "a new framework through political realignment." The third choice with 20 PERCENT was a DPJ-centered government, followed by 19 PERCENT, who wanted an LDP-centered government. In the October poll, as well, the political realignment choice garnered 28 PERCENT, while the grand coalition took 25 PERCENT as the first and second choices, respectively. The results can be read as showing the expectations of voters for a new politics that exceeded the existing framework.

(2) Ruling coalition concerned about plunge in public approval rate for Aso cabinet in Yomiuri poll

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
November 4, 2008

The government and ruling coalition are increasingly alarmed about the fact that the approval rate for the cabinet of Prime Minister Taro Aso slipped below its disapproval rate for the first time, as well as about a plunge in the support rate for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Since Aso put off a general election for the House of Representatives, he was able to avoid going to the electorate to receive their judgment for the time being. However, there is no prospect as to whether his public support rate can improve.

Many in the ruling camp are lamenting over the fact that the new economic stimulus package Aso announced on Oct. 30 did not lead to boosting the public approval rate for the cabinet.

LDP Secretary General Hiroyuki Hosoda said yesterday:

"Since the government has come up with a bold economic package, it will gradually become well-known to the public. However, since the individual measures are difficult to understand, the package has yet to lead to raising the support rate."

Akihiro Ota, chief representative of the New Komeito, the LDP's coalition partner, suggested that the prime minister's exertion of all possible efforts to implement the economic package would lead to better approval ratings for the Aso cabinet. He stated: "The public's worried about the economy. They are watching whether the government can implement the measures."

Some have contended that Aso's mentioning of a consumption tax hike

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affected the results of the poll. A high government official said:

"The public might have taken the prime minister's reference to the consumption tax as a tax hike. Unless the prime minister explains that the consumption tax will be increased after fully considering the economic situation, the approval rates for his cabinet will not go up."

The government and ruling parties are strongly shocked by the fact that the approval rating for the Aso cabinet slipped below its disapproval rating barely a month after it was inaugurated. The approval rates for the governments of Prime Ministers Abe and Fukuda, who resigned in about one year after taking office, slipped below their disapproval rates in six months and five months respectively after they formed their cabinets.

Some LDP lawmakers feel relieved at the postponement of Lower House dissolution, with one saying: "If we held an election now, it would be awful. Some other members predicted that it would be more difficult to seize the right timing for an election. A mid-level party member pointed out:

"Under the situation in which the cabinet's disapproval rate tops the approval rate, the prime minister has no choice but to be cautious about dissolving the Lower House. The focus will be on whether the disapproval ratings for the cabinet will exceed 50 PERCENT . If it exceeds that number, it will be difficult for the ruling coalition to win the election."

Meanwhile, the opposition camp now feels like it is riding high.

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama yesterday told reporters in Gifu Prefecture in a strong tone: "The public see that the ruling coalition's economic-boosting package will not be able to resolve the financial crisis." Deputy President Naoto Kan took a view that Aso would avoid dissolving the Lower House for a while, saying: "Prime Minister Aso has now been unable to dissolve the lower chamber. He probably will not call an election."

The ruling camp intends to boost the Aso cabinet's popularity by improving the economic situation by implementing the economic stimulus package. Meanwhile, Aso intends to promote his presence in the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. In order to force a dissolution of the Lower House, however, the opposition bloc plans to shake the government and ruling coalition over the dismissal of Air-Self Defense Force Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami and other issues.

(3) When will Lower House be dissolved? Four possibilities afoot: around Christmas, at beginning of next regular Diet session, in tandem with Tokyo assembly election, or Lower House members serve out their term

Prime Minister Taro Aso, giving policy priority to measures to deal with the global recession, has decided not to dissolve the Lower House anytime soon. When is he going to decide the right timing to dissolve the Diet and call a general election? The prime minister is likely to continue to face a critical juncture.

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Livelihood over Lower House dissolution

"At some point, we will have to fight, but we must first prioritize the people's livelihoods over Lower House dissolution," Aso told an LDP executive meeting yesterday afternoon.

The New Komeito has eventually accepted the prime minister's decision to forgo a plan to officially kick off the campaign on Nov. 18 for an election on Nov. 30. But the party still wants to have a long interval between the next Lower House election and next summer's Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election.

What are some of the possible dates for Diet dissolution before the Lower House members' terms end next September? The nearest date being mentioned in the LDP is around Christmas, after a second supplementary budget is enacted and a fiscal 2009 budget is compiled. This could be followed by an official announcement on Jan. 13 for an election on Jan. 25.

This scenario, however, would make it difficult for the fiscal 2009 budget to clear the Diet before the end of the current fiscal year, forcing the government to produce a provisional budget. Many LDP lawmakers are dismissive of this scenario. The reason is because if the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan prolongs Diet deliberations on the second supplementary budget, the prime minister might be forced to dissolve the chamber before a set of additional stimulus measures takes shape.

LDP Diet Affairs Committee Vice Chairman Yoshihide Suga, who is close to Aso, appeared in a BS11 program last night in which he expressed a negative view about dissolving the Lower House before year's end, citing the prime minister's tight diplomatic timetable.

It is also possible to dissolve the chamber at the beginning of the next regular Diet session in January. This would require the compilation of an interim budget, however.

A consumption tax hike out of desperation

A combination of April 14 and 26, after enacting the fiscal 2009 budget by March 31, is another option. This scenario is compatible with the New Komeito's time limit set at April.

But unlike a budget bill, budget-related bills can clear the Diet with a two-third override vote after the Upper House refuses action, but the Lower House must wait 60 days before after passing the legislation. The enactment of such bills in May might be followed by Lower House dissolution in May for an election in June. Some in the LDP think that if the timeline was delayed to that extent, the Lower House election should be held in tandem with the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election -- the last thing the New Komeito wants. Aware of such concern of the New Komeito, Suga flatly rejected the idea of double elections on an Oct. 30 BS 11 program.

Some have begun whispering that the Lower House members would serve out their term, with an LDP source saying, "Once the long regular Diet session convenes, the DPJ's relentless attack would deprive the prime minister of the energy to dissolve the Lower House." There is even talk that Prime Minister Aso would be replaced.

Some think that Aso referred in yesterday's press conference to a

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consumption tax hike in three years' time out of desperation. That is because in order to raise the consumption tax in three years, the LDP will have to get through at least one Lower House election and the Upper House election in 2010 while pledging to raise taxes.

If Lower House dissolved now, difficult for LDP-New Komeito coalition to secure majority

Prime Minister Aso seems to have decided to put off the envisioned dissolution based on his judgment that the environment surrounding the LDP was too harsh to call a general election at this point.

The LDP conducted in late September an opinion survey to find out voting patterns in the 300 single-seat constituencies. As a result, the LDP and the DPJ were neck-and-neck with the former projected to win 215 seats and the latter 214 seats, according to a person concerned. The New Komeito was expected to garner 25. In other words, the results showed slight difficulty for the ruling coalition to secure a majority (241 seats). The LDP later conducted a follow-up survey in selected constituencies. The results indicated a decline for the LDP and a gain for the DPJ. "If an election is called now, we will lose the reins of government," an LDP leader said.

Meanwhile, the Yomiuri Shimbun conducted an opinion poll on Oct. 10-12 in which 70 PERCENT of respondents said that priority should be given to propping up the economy. This trend seems to have gained momentum as the global economy has since worsened.

Aso is reportedly told former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori on the phone on Oct. 29: "Many LDP and New Komeito supporters think economic stimulus measures should be prioritized over the dissolution. Can I dissolve the Lower House at a time like this?"

The DPJ also surveyed 194 districts from late August through September. It was intended to analyze the trends of close-race districts excluding 52 single-seat constituencies where DPJ candidates won in the previous "postal election" that worked against the party, and constituencies where the DPJ has yet to determine its candidates. The results showed that the DPJ had the edge over the LDP in some 80 constituencies and that the two parties were neck-and-neck in about 60 districts.

(4) DPJ to adopt economic stimulus measures on Nov. 5: Stressing differences from government plan in giving priority to public good

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
November 2, 2008

The DPJ will adopt an economic pump-priming package designed for the "Next Cabinet" to deal with the financial turmoil. The main feature of the package is, of course, giving top priority to the public good. Because the party is alarmed about Prime Minister Aso's strong intent to map out additional economic stimulus measures, the party wants to impress the public that it was the DPJ that first advocated giving top priority to the public good, by putting together every possible policy in the run-up to the envisaged next Lower House election.

The DPJ and the LDP have many points in common regarding economic stimulus measures. Shifting from the economy that is dependent on external demand to the domestic demand-led economy, by stimulating

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consumption with direct refunding of tax money to people is the scenario both parties envisage.

Concerning specific measures, too, while the DPJ is calling for a child allowance and toll-free expressways, the government has come up with a benefit payment plan targeting all households in place of the flat-sum tax cut, and a significant cut in expressway tolls. They have thus proposed policies with similar concepts and specifics.

The DPJ criticized the government's additional package as poorly-compiled fake economic pump-priming measures, as one Upper House member put it. In particular, the DPJ takes pride in being the first party that called for toll-free expressways five years ago during the 2003 Lower House election.

If the government implements these policies, the DPJ's policy would fade away. The DPJ is, therefore, frantic about stressing the differences from the government's plan. Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama underscored: "The government plan is stop-gap pork-barrel largesse. The DPJ will build a safety net and reach out to those who really need our help."

The child allowance is a permanent system targeting the child-rearing generation. The DPJ says that its child allowance system will also serve as a measure to address the declining birth rate with Deputy President Naoto Kan saying, "This policy will help those who want to have a child or those who want another one."

The government has criticized the DPJ's policy as lacking fiscal backing. In response, the DPJ has come up with a four-year road map. The party is now counterattacking the government and the ruling parties as failing to indicate a road map and fiscal resources. The DPJ does not rule out the possibility of a future raise in the sales tax. However, it has not touched on a time schedule to realize that. Some party members are opposing the party's stance with one noting, "Is it all right to keep mum about a fiscal plan?" There is a strong possibility of the ruling camp stepping up their offensive over fiscal resources to finance its proposal.

The DPJ is determined that if the government submit the second supplementary budget bill that incorporates the additional economic stimulus package to the Diet, it would thoroughly pursue Diet deliberations with focus on differences in the policies of the two parties.

The shortcut to realize the DPJ's policy is a change of administration. President Ichiro Ozawa is calling for an early dissolution of the Lower House, saying, "Only the administration that secured public support through election can implement really drastic measures."

(5) Main statements by former ASDF Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami in press conference; Country not allowing rebuttal is same as North Korea

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
November 4, 2008

Former Air Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami held a press conference at the Jiji Press head office last night in which he explained the true intention of his essay. The following are the

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main statements he made.

(Opening statement)

I wrote the essay based on my belief for the nation and its people, and I have not tendered my resignation. The dismissal is heartbreaking for me, having been with the Self-Defense Forces for a long period of time. I am worried more than anything about the stain on the honor of the Air Self-Defense Force and the entire Self-Defense Forces.

Japan is a magnificent country with an old history and excellent traditions. Japan was never an aggressor. A spell placed on the country by the postwar education system has ruined our national confidence, the morale of the SDF personnel, and the national security system. There is no national army in the world where civilian control is more ensured than the SDF.

I hope my dismissal will spark honest and active debates on how the nation and national defense should be rather than making it more

difficult for SDF personnel to express their views and engage in debate.

(Questions and answers)

-- What was the reason for you to write the essay at this time point in time?

"In order for Japan to develop as a state in the 21st century, I thought it would be difficult for our country to implement policies based on its own volition unless it is freed from a masochistic view of history. I never thought that my essay would cause such a huge commotion. My judgment that the time has come for people to express their views freely in Japan might have been wrong."

-- What about the contents?

"I do not think they were wrong."

-- Will you respond to calls for Diet testimony?

"I want to respond them actively."

-- Do you think the government's view of history is wrong?

"I think it should be examined."

-- China and South Korea have expressed displeasure.

"That reflects differences in views. We have no control on how other countries think. We should understand and deal with each other as grownups."

-- As the top uniformed officer, your statement is weighty.

"A country where people are not allowed to say things like this cannot be called a democracy. If one is not allowed to rebut the government's view, it is the same as being in North Korea."

-- Doesn't opposing the government's view mean opposing the government's decision?"

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"It is questionable whether what is called the Murayama Statement was really verified, and whether it is convincing to all Japanese people."

DPJ head Ozawa criticizes government for appointing Tamogami as ASDF chief

Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa visited on Nov. 3 Toyo University in Bunkyo Ward to answer questions from young voters on what was dubbed the first-time-ever live Internet conference on the Nico Nico Douga site. Asked about the timing of dissolving the Lower House for a snap general election, Ozawa criticized the prime minister, saying: "Prime Minister Taro Aso has been passing up opportunities. The opening of the current extraordinary Diet session in late September was the best timing for him. But he passed that up; he has been indecisive."

Ozawa later held a press conference in Tokyo. Touching on former ASDF Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami's release of an essay contradictory to the government's view, Ozawa denounced the government, saying: "The government's responsibility for appointing him (to the ASDF chief of staff) knowing that he had written a similar essay before is grave."

(6) Government eyes yen loans in fiscal 2009 to Vietnam to assist space-development project

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
November 1, 2008

The government has decided to help Vietnam in promoting its space

development project. It plans to continue a preliminary survey by a joint team with the private sector until the end of this fiscal year. If requested, the government will look into providing that nation with several tens of billions of yen in yen loans in fiscal 2009. This aid, if realized, would be the nation's first full-scale assistance for a foreign country's space-development project. Through assistance for foreign countries' projects, the government aims to assist the Japanese space industry in exploring overseas markets.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAEA), NEC, Mitsubishi Corp., and other firms will participate in the survey. The aim of the survey is to select areas for cooperation, such as image processing and equipment procurement. The government also eyes aid for infrastructure construction plans by Vietnam, for instance, a plan to construct a Hoa Lac space center (tentative name). JAXA is also considering the possibility of offering comprehensive cooperation with the Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology (VAST), which has engaged in space business.

Vietnam has launched space development activities as a national strategy. Its government is planning to launch a compact earth observation satellite that it developed on its own. Vietnam's first telecommunications satellite was successfully launched this April. An American company developed the satellite and provided operability technology. The Japanese government, through assistance, aims to create an environment to facilitate the aid recipients to adopt the Japanese technology.

(7) METI to streamline procedures for goods traded with EPA nations

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NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
November 4, 2008

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) will introduce a new system next fiscal year to simplify import and export procedures for goods traded with countries that have signed economic partnership agreements (EPA) with Tokyo. METI intends to automatically apply low tariff rates set under EPAs, even without certificates of origin, on goods imported by companies certified as handling products made in countries with which Japan has EPAs. Similarly, firms certified by Japan as exporting Japanese-made products will be taxed at lower rates by governments that have signed EPAs with Tokyo. By removing the requirement of submitting point-of-origin certification under the current system, the ministry aims to streamline expenses and time needed for the application of certification. As the first case, the new system will be applied to trade between Japan and Switzerland.

Point-of-origin certification is now required for goods imported even from countries with which Japan has EPAs to be eligible for lower tariffs. In exporting goods from Japan, exporters are required to submit point-of-origin certification issued by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Fees are needed for such certification to be issued, and about two days reportedly are needed for the application procedure.

Under the new system, companies deemed to have accurately assessed the places of origin of goods to handle will be designated as special exporters. The designated special exporters will then be eligible for trade partners' favorable duties under EPAs by merely listing their certification numbers and the goods' places of origin on invoices. To create the exporter-certification system as early as fiscal 2009, the government will revise legislation governing the issuance of point-of-origin certification for traded goods.

In response, the Finance Ministry will apply favorable tax rates under EPAs to goods exported from exporters certified as handling products by their respective governments, even without submitting point-of-origin certification.

If necessary, Japanese customs authorities will contact other governments to confirm the origin of exported goods.

(8) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi, Mainichi & Yomiuri:

Music producer Komuro to be arrested for fraud

Nikkei:

Japanese manufacturers consider plans for emerging nations

Sankei:

Cloned mouse produced from frozen cell

Tokyo Shimbun:

Government to sound out countries concerned about holding second G-20 emergency financial summit

Akahata:

551 municipalities do not confiscate national health insurance cards from households which cannot pay premiums

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(9) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) Young people and marijuana: Keio University students pay high price for buying and selling marijuana

(2) Confiscation of national health insurance cards: Appropriate reduction and exemption of premiums necessary

Mainichi:

(1) Whitepaper on crime victims: Need for carefully-crafted measures

(2) Japan should nurture young researchers

Yomiuri:

(1) Finely-tuned responses necessary for medical services for children

(2) Japan should be more active in peacekeeping

Nikkei:

(1) Path to low-carbon society: Measures against global warming needed even during financial crisis

Sankei:

(1) Additional sanctions should be applied on North Korea

(2) Carry out thorough influenza vaccination

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Delinquency in health insurance premiums: Children have no responsibility

(2) Japan should prepare for more foreign workers

Akahata:

(1) Red Purge: The state and corporations should provide relief for victims

(10) Prime Minister's schedule, November 3

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

November 4, 2008

07:31

Took a walk around private residence in Kamiyama-cho.

10:08

Decoration ceremony for the 2008 Order of Culture at the Imperial Palace.

11:21

Returned to the private residence.

18:58

Dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Nishi-Azabu with his wife Chikako and other family members to celebrate the silver wedding

anniversary.

Reporter: "Congratulations on your silver wedding anniversary. We also hope your administration will last long." Prime Minister: "Ha, ha! 25 years? That's too long."

21:00

Arrived at his private residence.

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SCHIEFFER